

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

NON-PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

Title: URBAN UTILITY BELT

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CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/231,804, filed on October 19, 2000, entitled URBAN UTILITY BELT.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates generally to a device for holding and supporting items and things in close proximity to a wearer's or user's body. More specifically, the present invention relates to a belt, around a user's waist or torso, to releaseably support at least one container for holding a myriad of items including, but not limited to a personal digital assistant, a notebook computer, a cellular phone, a beeper, a change purse, sunglasses case, protective devices, e.g., mace, CD players, MP3 players, paper products, writing utensils, wallet and keys.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a device for holding and supporting items and things in close proximity to a wearer's or user's body. Specifically, a belt, around a user's waist or torso, is used to support a myriad of items including, but not limited to a personal digital assistant, a notebook computer, a cellular phone, a beeper, a change purse, sunglasses case, protective devices, e.g., mace, CD players, MP3 players, paper products, writing utensils, wallet and keys. Many of these items can also be held in a container that is releasably attached to the belt by closure elements. In this way, the held items can be readily accessible and usable by the wearer/user.

The containers are and can each be individually designed to support the held items, to allow easy access to the items, so that they can easily be removed from the container and/or that the container can be easily removed from and replaced to and from the belt while worn by the user. In addition, the closure elements that secure the container to the belt are selectively releasable from one another, thereby permitting the wearer to position the any one of numerous desired types of containers to be placed on the belt at a variety of positions. Moreover, the positions of the containers on the belt may be defined by the wearer.

The utility belts of the prior art include tool bags that are available with removable or interchangeable pouches or other holders secured by fasteners. Moreover, the utility belts of the prior art were restricted to attachment and removal of the containers only upon the wearer's removal of the belt. However, these tool bags have a severely limited range of adjustability and the pouches or holders can readily be removed from the belt

without the intended participation of the user, resulting in the unintended dropping or theft of the containers. This is a particular problem when the wearer is in a crowded place.

Accordingly, there is a need for a utility belt for holding and supporting personal items that includes selectively releasable closure elements that permit the wearer to easily alter the position and type of container to suit the wearer's particular needs, while substantially reducing the unintended removal of the containers.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide a belt for holding and supporting personal items that includes selectively releasable closure elements that permit the wearer to easily alter the position and type of container to suit the wearer's particular needs, while substantially reducing the unintended removal of the containers.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a belt worn by a user to support items to be used by the user, including items that hold or support other items.

It is another object of the present invention for said supported items to be easily accessible and removable from said belt by said user.

It is an object of the present invention for said supported items to be held within a container supported on said belt, and that container be easily accessible and removable from said belt.

It is another object of the present invention that selectively releasable closure elements on said belt and on said supported items be attractive, fashionable, and yet functional to allow easy attachment and release of said supported items by said user and

that said attachment be secure so that said attached items will not be dropped, lost, misplaced or otherwise inadvertently separated from the user.

It is another object of the present invention that the selectively releasable closure elements be equally spaced on the belt so that attached items, having equally spaced attachment means, be able to be attached at any available location on said belt.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a method for selectively releasably attaching said container to said belt.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention eliminates the above-mentioned needs by providing a belt for holding and supporting items for a user comprising an outer belt surface, an inner belt surface opposite said outer belt surface, and a first portion of a selectively releasable closure element traversing the outer belt surface and engaging the inner belt surface.

The present invention is further directed to a method for selectively releasably attaching a container to a belt. The method includes the providing of a first portion of a three-way fastener to a belt and providing a second portion of a three-way fastener to a container. The method also includes the step of engaging the first portion and the second portion in an interlocking arrangement to selectively releasably attach the container to the belt.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a person, a user/wearer of the present invention, showing the belt with several attached items, with the belt around the wearer's waist.

FIG. 2 is a front view of the belt of the present invention shown with several first portions of a selectively releasable closure elements for receiving items to be attached to the belt.

FIG. 2a is a front view of an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a rear view of an item container showing the second portion of the selectively releasable closure elements and the zipper closure of the container.

FIG. 4 is a rear view of another item container showing the second portion of the selectively releasable closure element and the flap closure of the container.

FIG. 5 is a perspective of another item container showing the second portion of the selectively releasable closure element and the flap closure of the container.

FIG. 6 is a cross-sectional view of the item container shown in Fig. 5.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an item that is selectively releasably attached directly to the belt.

FIG. 8 is a front view of a section of the belt with several first portions of a selectively releasable closure elements.

FIG. 9 FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a person, a user/wearer of the present invention, showing the belt with several attached items, with the belt around the wearer's upper torso.

DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to Fig. 1, the invention, an accessory belt 10, worn on a person's body -- the user -- for holding thereon, preferably the waist or upper torso, one or more items. The belt 11 is typically made of leather, but can be made of other materials or combinations of materials as is known in the art. Belt 11 would typically be worn in the area of a wearer's waist 12, but may be worn higher, lower or on other areas of the wearer's body in order for belt 11 to comfortably support, on the wearer's body, the desired items from belt 11.

Referring to Fig. 2, belt 11 is elongated having two ends. Buckle 13 is at one end and belt tongue 14 at the other end. The latter, tongue 14 designed as well known in the art, to fit within the former, buckle 13 in order to buckle belt 11 in place. Belt tongue 14 has one or more belt tip holes 15 for engagement with buckle stick 16 of buckle 13. Fig.

2a shows an alternate embodiment of the belt 11. The belt 11 has fasteners 11a spaced an equal distance apart from an adjacent fastener 11a to engage the ends of the belt together by connecting with fastener 11b. In the preferred embodiment, each of the fasteners 11a is spaced approximately 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches center to center. One or more first portions 17 of a selectively releasable closure element are formed or otherwise securely attached to belt 11. The selectively releasable closure element is a three-way locking fastener, preferably a curtain fastener or a locking snap. In this preferred embodiment, the belt 11 receives a first portion 17 of a selectively releasable closure element; such that first portion 17 traverses the outer layer 18 of the belt 11 and engages the inner layer 19 of the belt 11. One or more first portions 17 are arranged along the length of belt 11 such that each first portion 17 is spaced an equal distance from an adjacent first portion 17.

In the preferred embodiment each first portion 17 is spaced a distance of approximately 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches center to center but preferably not less than 3 inches or greater than 4 inches from the next first portion 17. This distance provides ample support for items to be held at two points as will be discussed later herein. This distance is shown in Figs. 2 and 8 as a distance "A". Additionally, first portions 17 are located at the approximate center of the vertical height "B" of belt 11.

Items to be held to belt 11 include containers that hold items and actual items. Referring to Fig. 3, is a zippered case 20 to hold, for example, compact disc players or other miscellaneous items. Zipper 21 includes a pull tab 21a, shown in the closed position that provides access to said zippered case 20. An access slot 22 is provided to allow the user to access the interior of the case, such as with headphones for a compact disc player.

Fig. 4 shows a container, such as a pouch 23 having a flap closure 24, held closed by a hook and loop fastener means or snap fastener means (not shown). Pouch 23 may hold numerous personal items, including but not limited to a personal digital assistant type device or a pair of sunglasses. Pouch 23 has sides 23a and 23b that are flexible to expand and adapt to the size of the item to be stored therein. Pouch 23 may also include access slot 22.

Figs. 5 and 6 show another container such as a case 25. This case 25 can hold different items, depending on their size and shape, e.g., a portable wireless telephone or a wireless pager. Case 25 is of generally rigid construction having a closure flap 26 attached by a snap fastener means 27 to the front side 28 of case 25. Interior solid walls 29 of case 25 and flap 26 give case 25 its rigidity.

Each container item 20, 23 and 25 is selectively releasably attachable to belt 11 by one or more second portions 30 of the selectively releasable closure element. Each second portion 30 is adapted to receive a male end 32 of the first portion 17 by interlocking to a female end 31 on the second portion 30. At approximately the mid-point of said second portion 30 is the female end 31. The second portion 30 is integrally connected to the rear portion of each container item, such as a case 20, pouch 23 or case 25, in a permanent manner or at least intended to be permanent. As is shown in Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6, second portion 30 is attached at the top of a container e.g., the case 20, the pouch 23, and the case 25, at or near the top-rear thereof.

The selectively releasable attachment is by use of the selectively releasable closure element, with its interlocking first portion 17 and second portion 30. Thus, at the desired

locations of the upper portion of each container 20, 23 and 25, the second portion 30 is attached to said container through a rear portion of each container at each said respective selectively releasable attachment location. Each said container may be made of leather or other material or materials. Each said container may have one or more second portions 30 attached to it. When more than one second portion 30 is attached to a said container, each second portion 30 is separated from the next second portion 30 by the same distance "A" as first portions 17 are separated on belt 11.

As shown in Figs. 1, 7, and 9, a said container is attached to belt 11 by interlocking a female end 31 of each second portion 30 from said container to one or more first portions 17 on belt 11. Female end 31 has a diameter such that second portion 30 will stay connected to the male end 32 of first portion 17. When it is desired to separate a said container from said belt 11, the user disengages the interlocking arrangement of the three-way fastener so as to release second portion 30 from first portion 17. With at least two attachment points on an item or container, redundancy is provided in the event one of said second portions 30 should become loosened or detached from a first portion 17. It is contemplated that the belt 11 may incorporate the second portions 30 with female ends thereon and that the containers may incorporate the first portions 17 with male ends 32 thereon.

In an alternative embodiment as shown in Fig. 9, the user wears the belt 11 over the shoulder, so as to enable the user to carry larger or more cumbersome items, such as notebook computers, or for personal comfort.

Whether the container has a single second portion 30 or one or more second portions 30 to support it, the second portions are selectively releasably attached to the belt. The selectively releasable attachment may be disengaged by the user by manipulating the three-way fastener, or selectively releasable closure element, in a specific predetermined motion that is particular to the three-way fastener used.

In summary, the present invention is a belt on a person's torso for supporting and releasably holding one or more items which would include a container to hold an object or objects therein, said items or containers to be supported on said belt by a selectively releasable closure element, preferably a three-way fastener, having first portions with male ends spaced at equal distances from one another and second portions with female ends on said items and containers having the same spaced distance between the second portions so that a second portion can be selectively releasably and securely attached at any available location on the belt.

While the preferred embodiment of the present invention has been described in detail above, those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that numerous modifications are to the exemplary embodiment is possible without materially departing from the novel teachings and advantages of this invention. Accordingly, all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of this invention as defined in the following claims.